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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING

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National Organization for Public Health Nursing

MY YEAR'S WORK¹

BY EMMA R. CROSS, R.N.

I am a community nurse. Those of you whose work is similar to mine may find it in your hearts to wonder why I write. Even knowing that my professional experiences are not unlike the experiences of other nurses, I do feel that they are unique enough to record, principally in the hope that some one of my sister nurses may read and take heart when she realizes that perhaps near by in a small hamlet there works another nurse whose daily life holds bright spots or dark spots, whichever way the indicator of life turns.

Even though one's work carries her mostly always among the sick, the lame, the blind, the aged and the poverty-stricken, in these, the poorest places of God's great Kingdom, there is still good cheer enough to balance the scales to very livable proportions.

In my "annual report" to my Board there are details running something like these:

Early in September, 1920, attended Public Health Nurses' Convention at Saratoga Springs, N. Y. Helpful and inspiring session.

All schools were visited in my town with a newly-appointed school nurse. Help given in inspecting over 1,000 school children. Clothing and books obtained for a few and the school work formally turned over to the school nurse. Am now free to take up more in detail local community and rural work.

Two courses of lessons given, covering ten evenings each, as part of the night school work conducted in our public schools.

One woman was sent to Rochester at the request of the State Commission for the Blind. As local chairman of said committee, I have reported all known cases of blindness or partial blindness. These cases have been visited by the representatives from the State Department. In these visitations I have personally accompanied said representatives.

Have taken two patients to specialists in Rochester for submucous operations on the nose and throat and have made twelve subsequent trips with them for treatment.

One very sick patient was taken on a stretcher, in a baggage

¹ We wish space permitted us to print all the "details" of this account of what one nurse has meant to her community.

car, to a hospital in Buffalo. I think I will never forget that night. My patient was extremely ill, the baggage car was big and rumbly, my experience along this line very limited, my anxiety correspondingly large. The distance seemed endless. My feelings will be realized when at last that stretcher with its precious burden was placed in the ambulance and under the care of a physician.

Clothing and all necessary things were provided for one maternity case. The destitution in some homes at times like these and the joy of the mother over one simple little outfit are most moving.

After much writing and many rearrangements in plans, one feeble-minded boy has been admitted to a State Institution. Later, the father unknown to anyone, went to the institution and forthwith brought him home. So much for all our efforts to get him properly housed and under suitable training conditions.

One feeble-minded man has been, after proper application, committed to a State Institution.

Much time was spent during the fall in inspection of rural schools and rural school children. Parents were visited in an effort to interest them in needed adenoid and tonsil operations. These visits were not all sunshine, but considering it as a brand new movement in these rural districts they may be said to be fairly successful. One father, in expressing his mind, said, "It's all right for you people to ride around in your automobiles and tell folks what to do, but I for one ain't quite so easy. My kid ain't goin' to have no tonsils out." And another, when approached about the matter, said, "If the woman (meaning his wife) says it's all right, it is. Whatever she says goes for she knows."

During December nearly two weeks were spent in connection with a Community Christmas and the spirit of generosity and good will shown by the people was indeed good to see. One evening was set aside for a community meeting and a very excellent musical program was given, which included every one of the many talented local people. All guests came bearing gifts of groceries, toys or clothing and our large city hall was filled to overflowing. The toys were taken to Community Hall, where the Community Secretary had furnished a tree for the children. Cards were purchased and personally given out to about three hundred children. An evening of songs, pictures and so forth was thoroughly enjoyed.

The donations of money at this meeting made it possible to remedy many physical defects during the year. This could not have been done except for these gifts. This community Christmas was said to be one of the most noteworthy events in the history of the village.

In February an Infant Welfare Clinic was held by the State Department. The local work was done by a committee of enthusiastic women. The town was thoroughly canvassed and personal calls were made by these women, the school nurse and myself. The success of this clinic cannot be estimated. One hundred and seven children were examined. Much follow-up work has been done. Fifty-six calls have been made and thirty-four children have been taken to their respective physicians for advice. * * * Under-nourished children were kept under observation and weighed and measured at intervals. In these cases necessary defects were remedied and milk was provided.

One old lady with a malignant growth on her face has been taken to the clinic at Buffalo for X-ray treatment. I drive a car and find it sometimes quicker and less wearisome than traveling by train or trolley, and my friends like it too—especially this old lady, who remarks, "Miss C——, you're a good woman. You have a kind heart. You're a good driver and I like you." She exudes a sort of philosophy of life that makes the trips short and very enjoyable.

There have been health clinics, talks given at Mothers' Club meetings, Tuberculosis Conferences, Red Cross Association Meetings, etc. A great deal of time has been spent on some social problems and conditions which have resulted in court cases. * * *

I have endeavored to show you how the "scales" balance; how in spite of discouraging days there are the bright ones; how in the back of every cloud the silver shines.

ITEMS

FLORENCE M. PATTERSON, who has so ably filled the position of Director of the National Organization for Public Health Nursing during the past year has resigned. Miss Patterson accepted the position with the stipulation that a permanent director should be secured as soon as possible. Anne Stevens, for three years Director of the New York Maternity Center Association, will succeed her.

DURING the week of November 14, New York City was the center of the "Health World," so to speak. People came from every state in the Union and from our neighbor country, Canada, to attend the conference meetings at the Hotel Astor and the Public Health Exposition at the Grand Central Palace.

The program was prepared by the American Public Health Association in connection with its Fiftieth Annual Meeting.

It was a real success, and everyone attending either the conferences or the exposition is certain that much was accomplished for the cause of health. The conferences were, of course, only for those professionally concerned with health matters, but the Grand Central Palace was visited by everyone—old and young, educated and uninformed—a cosmopolitan crowd that passed from one booth to another, curious about the various organizations that care for their health.

It is generally believed that this first lesson to the public was well worth while and the American Public Health Association is to be congratulated on another successful achievement.

The National Health Council sends the following information:

Only six of the 143 bills concerned in some phase of public health passed the special session of Congress, commenced on April 11, adjourned on November 23, 1921. It is interesting to note that about 10,000 bills and resolutions were introduced in the House, and about 3,000 in the Senate. Only about one per cent. of these was concerned with public health.

The "Maternity Bill," providing for federal coöperation with the states in promoting the welfare of maternity and infancy, after many vicissitudes during a three years' struggle, was passed by both houses of Congress and was signed by President Harding the day before Thanksgiving. The Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor will administer the Act, with the Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service and the United States Commissioner of Education.

The continuance of the Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board and the creating of the Veteran's Bureau are the other outstanding newly created laws.

MISS JANE E. HITCHCOCK has undertaken an interesting piece of work this winter. She is giving all her time to lecturing on Public Health Nursing to senior students in training schools in Greater New York and through the state. A letter just received from her says:

"Here is a copy of the prospectus of six lectures on Public Health Nursing. I hope you will like it. I am sure you will feel that there is much more to be said and that six class periods are altogether too short a time to cover more than a small part of the field. Quite true, but you know that the objective point in this series is merely to let the senior nurse get a peep, through a half-opened door, into this great field of interest. We do not pretend to go into minute details, the class and I, for this they must get later and in a more extensive course of study. We just try to look into the picture through the crack in the door, and decide whether we wish to get a closer and clearer view. In short, I mean to say that the series is designed to give senior nurses an intelligent idea of Public Health Nursing, whether or not they may later choose it for themselves. They should be conversant with it for their own general culture. As to the success of the series—I do not know what the nurses think of it, but I do know that I am enjoying it hugely. I have always felt a keen interest in young nurses and this opportunity to meet them eye to eye and heart to heart, without any state examination as a dread at the end, is a real joy."

As for the principals of the schools—well, I suppose they feel the message to be a sincere one or else they would not ask me to give it. My schedule of appointments is getting very full."

Miss Hitchcock's prospectus, which embodies the experience of years, would be of interest to anyone contemplating instruction of students in public health nursing.